

# The Elementary English Review

VOL. XIX

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SPECIAL NUMBER

## The Arts and Children's Literature

Glimpses of Glory in Children's Books.....JOHN E. BREWTON

Educational Values of Animated Cartoons.....FLORENCE BRUMBAUGH

Opportunity to Write Freely.....PAUL WITTY

Use of Recorded Music to Introduce Literature to

Children.....FERN BOWES, FLORENCE PAINTER, and VESTA LYNN

### *Symposium on the Comics:*

Shall Our Children Read the Comics? Yes!...FRANK CUTRIGHT, JR.

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Review of Calico, the Wonder Horse...MIRIAM BLANTON HUBER

### *The War and Elementary Education*

English for United Action.....HOLLAND ROBERTS

Vacation for Victory.....CLARA EVANS

### *Reading*

Linguistics and Reading.....LEONARD BLOOMFIELD

New Books for Boys and Girls.....MIRIAM BLANTON HUBER

THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

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# *The Elementary English Review*

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J. L. Certain, *Editor*

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San Francisco, California



From *The Little Mermaid*, by Hans Christian Andersen,  
illustrated by Dorothy P. Lathrop. Macmillan



# THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

VOL. XIX

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## Glimpses of Glory in Children's Books

JOHN E. BREWTON\*

*Professor of Education  
George Peabody College for Teachers  
Nashville, Tennessee*

TODAY beautiful books for children are a potential heritage of American boys and girls. Books, beautiful within and without, made so by authors, artists, and craftsmen are coming from the presses of publishers annually. Picture books for the very young, picture-story books for the now-we-are-sixes, and books of all kinds accurately and artistically illustrated are among them. To be sure, only a few of these are of permanent value, but the real artistic treasures produced down through the ages shine out and recent years have contributed their share.

The great need today is that these treasures that constitute the American child's magic heritage be made available to children everywhere throughout the length and breadth of our land, North, East, South, West, in American schools, libraries, bookstores, and homes. Everything possible should be done in America to bring all children, regardless of race or of economic status, into contact with the distinguished books which combine the achievements of authors, artists, and craftsmen.

One who knows the ever-increasing

wealth of children's picture books, picture-story books, and illustrated books for older boys and girls wonders how long it will be before parents, teachers, and librarians will see to it that provisions are made whereby more children can come into this magic heritage. And what a heritage it is, once we explore it!

There are sixteen picture books of Randolph Caldecott teeming with good humor and gaiety of spirit and love of English country life, the "toy books" of Walter Crane, and the ageless quaint pictures of Kate Greenaway whose children are "dear little figures, in frocks and frills" who "go roaming about at their own sweet wills," usually, however, in English gardens. There are Leslie Brooks' inimitable pictures of animals children love in the Johnny Crow books which are so filled with light-hearted humor that "even the Duckling couldn't help chuckling in Johnny Crow's Garden." There are the memorable illustrations drawn by Sir John Tenniel for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, the decorative and realistic illustrations of Howard Pyle, the

\* Delia Taylor and Carl F. Brown assisted in the preparation of this article.

vigorous and colorful pictures of N. C. Wyeth, the goblins, strange trees, and weird illustrations of Arthur Rackham, the bold illustrations of James Daugherty whose rugged sweep and grandeur of style have given us *Daniel Boone* and *In the Beginning: The First Chapter of Genesis*. There are the informational books, and *The Christ Child* of the Peter-shams, the colorful books of the Haders, the unforgettable *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gág, the Angus books of Marjorie Flack, the *Peter Rabbit* of Beatrix Potter, and the feast of color in *The Golden Basket* by Ludwig Bemelmans. There are the heroic drawings of Kate Seredy for her soul-stirring hero story, *The White Stag*. Then there are *The Seven Simeons* of Boris Artzybasheff "whose beauty of line holds the true pattern of Celtic design," *Ferdinand* of Robert Lawson, *Babar* of Jean de Brunhoff, *The Flying Locomotive* of William Pène du Bois, *Make Way For Ducklings* of Robert McCloskey, and, of course, those distinguished Caldecott Award books, Dorothy Lathrop's *Animals of the Bible*, Thomas Handforth's *Mei Li*, the d'Aulaire's *Abraham Lincoln*, and Robert Lawson's *They Were Strong and Good*.

Frederic G. Melcher, in 1937, established an award for the most distinguished American picture book for children. It was fitting that it should be known as the Caldecott Award, in honor of the man whose name is inseparably connected with the beginning of the modern era of good picture books for children.

The terms of the Caldecott Award provide that the most distinguished American picture book for children shall be selected each year by a committee of the American Library Association. The selection is based upon the "creation of the artist, the product of his initiative and

imagination" rather than upon the text. The four winners of the annual Caldecott Award are Dorothy Lathrop in 1938 for *Animals of the Bible*, Thomas Handforth in 1939 for *Mei Li*, the d'Aulaires in 1940 for *Abraham Lincoln*, and Robert Lawson in 1941 for *They Were Strong and Good*.

In three of the Caldecott Award books, *Mei Li* by Thomas Handforth, *Abraham Lincoln* by the d'Aulaires, and *They Were Strong and Good* by Robert Lawson, the illustrators are also the creators of the text. The exception is Dorothy Lathrop's *Animals of the Bible* in which the text consists of selections from the King James version. In each of these books the pictures have a story-telling quality, complement the text, and present by means of graphic representation what would take many words to describe in detail.

Certain publishers feel that books written and illustrated by the same person are most likely to result in distinguished books for children. While this may be questionable and we have such notable exceptions as the perfect blending of conceptions of author and artist in the Lewis Carroll-Sir John Tenniel collaboration on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, it is true that many distinguished books for children are being produced today by author-illustrators. Of the twenty John Newbery Medal books, seven were produced by author-illustrators: *The Story of Mankind* by Hendrik Willem Van Loon, *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle* by Hugh Lofting, *Smoky: the Cowhorse* by Will James, *Waterless Mountain* by Laura Adams Armer, *The White Stag* by Kate Seredy, *Daniel Boone* by James Daugherty, and *Call It Courage* by Armstrong Sperry. Of the 94 books included in The American Institute of Graphic Arts Exhibition of Books Made for Chil-

dren in the United States and Canada during the five years 1937-1941, 33 are by author-illustrators, 14 of the 24 picture books included are produced by author-illustrators, 8 of the 28 story books, 3 of the 22 books for older boys and girls, and 8 of the 20 informational books.

None of the Caldecott Award books are illustrated by artists new to the field. Each did successful illustrations in the field of children's books prior to receiving the award. Research, study, and travel



From *They Were Strong and Good*. Written and illustrated by Robert Lawson. Viking.

were essential to a true and authentic presentation of life as it is shown in these Award books. Hours of study were devoted to the animals of the Biblical days and to the vegetation and foliage which form the backgrounds of the pictures in *Animals of the Bible*. Thomas Handforth spent several years in China studying before he produced *Mei Li*. The d'Aulaires, not being native Americans, felt the need for getting closer to the soil and to the "feel" of the Lincoln Trail before beginning *Abraham Lincoln*. They

made a camping trip, spending days and nights in the mountains of Kentucky and camping on the banks of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, before they began their biography. Robert Lawson, as he states in *They Were Strong and Good*, was picturing the story of the heritage of not only himself, but of most Americans today. The essential facts had to be authenticated by study and research.

It is a commonly accepted opinion that children and adults (who purchase most of the books children read) prefer colored pictures to those done in black and white. It is interesting to note that in all of the Caldecott Award books except *Abraham Lincoln* the pictures are produced in black and white. Even in *Abraham Lincoln*, in addition to pictures done in five colors, there are others in black and white, which many consider equally beautiful.

Varying widely in their settings, themes, and techniques, the illustrations in each book seem especially suited to the total composition of the book. Whether they be the delicate lines and careful backgrounds of Dorothy Lathrop, the two-dimensional child-like illustrations of the d'Aulaires, the bold, suggestive pictures of Thomas Handforth, or the simple, humorous, and beautiful pen-and-ink drawings of Robert Lawson, they carry out the spirit and atmosphere of the books.

The characteristics of Dorothy Lathrop's work are delicacy, persistent effort to say each thing beautifully, accuracy, and joyousness. Her strength lies in the variety she gets from her treatment of black and white. She prefers to portray animals and fairies for she lives in a world outside our own, a world of children, animals, and fairies. Books of poetry and fanciful tales comprise most of her work. At least twenty-four of the books she has illustrated have been direct-

ly concerned with the fairy world. She has illustrated books of poetry by Hilda Conkling, Walter de la Mare, Sara Teasdale, and Rachel Field; also the anthology, *Sung Under the Silver Umbrella*. In 1931 she became an author-illustrator, her first book being *The Fairy Circus*. Since *The Fairy Circus* Miss Lathrop has written and illustrated seven other books: *The Little White Goat*, *The Lost Merry-Go-Round*, *The Snail Who Ran, Who Goes There?*, *Bouncing Betsy*, *Hide and Go Seek*, and *Presents for Lupe*.

In *Mei Li*, Thomas Handforth has given children a beautiful book in both text and picture. He has revealed a fine understanding of Chinese children. With beauty of composition, of mass and line, bold pictures of Mei Li's experiences spread across each page to the delight of children. The pictures reveal not only an artist who is sympathetic with his subject but who is also most observant of everyday life. Handforth has also illustrated *Toutou in Bondage* by Elizabeth Coatsworth and *Tranquilina's Paradise* by Susan Cowles Smith. Since the publication of *Mei Li*, he has written and illustrated *Faraway Meadow*.

The d'Aulaires, Ingri, born into a gay Norwegian family, and Edgar, the son of a well-known Italian painter and an American mother, have given children nine books in addition to *Abraham Lincoln*. The first of these books for children, *The Magic Rug*, grew out of a visit to North Africa where they had made more than two thousand sketches and paintings. In this book the d'Aulaires brought a new richness of color to books for American children through their method of lithographing their drawings on stone—a separate stone for each color. In 1932 appeared the story of a little boy in Norway's winter, *Ola*, to be followed the next year by *Ola and Blakken* which recounts

something of Ola's summer activities. A distinguished book, *The Conquest of the Atlantic*, appeared in 1933, a picture-story book of the conquest of ocean distances down through the ages. Then came *The Lord's Prayer, Children of the Northlights, George Washington, East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, and



From *Abraham Lincoln*. Written and illustrated by Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire. Doubleday, Doran.

*Abraham Lincoln. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln* set a new standard for biography in picture-book format. The text is outstanding in that it is informal and the incidents well chosen. The drawings have been made from the standpoint of the children themselves. Toy models have been used instead of real models; that is, rocking horses instead of real horses. *Animals Everywhere* and *Leif the Lucky* are the most recent publications of the d'Aulaires.



Elizabeth MacKinstry was speaking. Her subject was Robert Lawson. "You watch that young man. There is the best pen line in America today. He has the classic pen technique; he stems right from the great ones. Look at the beauty of that design, see the delicacy and strength in that line, how he masses his blacks, how he uses white—just that little checker-board there shows how much he knows. And the humour through it all, from spontaneous gaiety to a wise and conscious humour, it's always there." Prophetic words were these, for in the past twelve years Robert Lawson has illustrated 35 books for children, among them *Ferdinand*, *Wee Gillis* and *Pilgrim's Progress*. In 1939 he wrote and illustrated his first book, *Ben and Me*, which was followed in 1940 by the Caldecott Award book, *They Were Strong and Good*, and in 1941, by *I Discover Columbus*. *They Were Strong and Good* is a serious book which purports to give American children, through simple narrative and pictures rich in detail, an interest and a pride in their own backgrounds. The range of the pictures is extensive considering the few incidents related. The North, the South, the sea, the farm, the gay, the tragic are in the pictures.

Each of the winners of the Caldecott Award made speeches of acceptance. In these speeches they reflected something of their attitudes toward children. Dorothy Lathrop, lover of children and animals, said:

I wonder if we don't too often forget how new this natural world is to children, how fresh and unjaded their interest in it? Of course, we authors and illustrators are up against tremendous competition in trying to market our wares. No wonder we sometimes strive desperately to attract with novelty the attention of publishers who are adults and of a buying public which is also adult. But to the child himself our most novel inven-

tion is not more strange and wonderful than the living creatures of this world, and our most vivid imagination can devise nothing more enthralling than all their ways.

Children feel a natural kinship with all living things. It is we adults who alienate them. When they reach out to touch the brightly colored bug or caterpillar, it is the mothers who cry, "Step on it!" When they stretch out their hands to a dog, it is the mothers who shriek, "Look out! He'll bite you!" It was not the dog who frightened the child, but the mother who yanked it back, sobbing with a new terror.

Perhaps in *Animals of the Bible* I have taken a liberty in introducing children into the picture of the family dogs. But I felt sure that, though no children were mentioned in the text, where the dogs were, even in those ancient days, there the children would be also, and helping them to more crumbs than those which normally fell from their master's table. For there is a special link in all ages between children and animals, and this is, of course, why there are so many animal stories written for them.

Ingri d'Aulaire, who with her husband Edgar has been working for ten years on children's books, said:



From *Mei Li*. Written and illustrated by Thomas Handforth. Doubleday, Doran.

Now, is there any vocation that could be richer and more fulfilling than work for children? You have a public with wide-open ears and eyes, without prejudices, and

with a mind ready to be influenced by good or by bad. Grown-ups are hard to get at. They have their taste already settled; perhaps it is a good taste, perhaps it is a bad one. You just cannot do very much with it. But except for a very short period in every child's life where he has to go through a state of admiration for something that is sweet and pretty, without any inner meaning or relation to life, children have an excellent taste. You can fool grown-ups, give them something that is skimmed off your own surface, executed with great skill and taste and most will think—that is just wonderful. But you cannot fool a child. If a picture is cold he feels it, however beautiful the surface, and if you want to grasp and hold a child you have to give all there is in you, all your warmth and feeling.

Robert Lawson, who sees no difference in drawing for children and drawing for adults except that "working for children is a little harder, it is more fun, it pays much less in money, but much more in self-respect," said:

If any one's work, whether it is illustration or writing, looks or sounds as though it were obviously intended for children, then it is talking down to children. It is talking baby-talk with illustration which is silly, and which children bitterly resent.

I have never seen in the work of any of the illustrators whom children have loved for generations the slightest indication that they were catering to limited tastes or limited understandings.

Personally I feel that children are much less limited in their tastes and understandings than adults are. For children are not limited by stupid second-hand notions of what they ought to like, or how they ought to think.

And so I conclude this discussion of the American child's artistic heritage with the concluding words of Mr. Lawson's Caldecott Award acceptance speech. He said in conclusion:

We must not give them [children] just a splendid or an intriguing Juvenile List. We must give them Books. Books that will become tattered and grimy from use, not books too handsome to grovel with. Books that will make them weep, books that will

rack them with hearty laughter. Books that absorb them so that they have to be shaken loose from them. Books that they will put under their pillows at night. Books that give them gooseflesh and glimpses of glory.

We must give them not what we think they ought to have, but *everything* we have to give, without restraint, with absolute frankness, and honesty and sincerity. They will do their own choosing, they will do their own selecting, and what they choose will be honest and of good repute.

#### PICTURE BOOKS BY RANDOLPH CALDECOTT AND BOOKS ILLUSTRATED BY THE WINNERS OF THE CALDECOTT AWARD

##### PICTURE BOOKS\* BY RANDOLPH CALDECOTT

John Gilpin  
The House that Jack Built  
The Babes in the Wood  
The Mad Dog  
Three Jovial Huntsmen  
Sing a Song of Sixpence  
The Queen of Hearts  
The Farmer's Boy  
The Milkmaid  
Hey-Diddle-Dee and Baby Bunting  
A Frog He Would a-Wooing Go  
The Fox Jumps Over the Parson's Gate  
Come Lasses and Lads  
Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross, etc.  
Mrs. Mary Blaize  
The Great Panjandrum Himself

##### BOOKS ILLUSTRATED BY DOROTHY LATHROP

The Three Mulla Mulgars, by Walter de la Mare. Knopf, 1919  
A Little Boy Lost, by William H. Hudson. Knopf, 1920  
Down-a-Down Derry, by Walter de la Mare. Holt, 1922  
Crossings, by Walter de la Mare. Knopf, 1923

\* Frederick Warne and Company.

- The Grateful Elephant, translated by E. W. Burlingame. Yale, 1923  
 Silverhorn, by Hilda Conkling. Stokes, 1924  
 Dutch Cheese (stories from Broomsticks), by Walter de la Mare. Knopf, 1925  
 Made-to-Order Stories, by Dorothy Canfield. Harcourt, 1925  
 The Light Princess, by George MacDonald. Macmillan, 1926  
 Tales from the Enchanted Isles, by Ethel M. Gate. Yale, 1926



From *An Ear for Uncle Emil*, by E. R. Gaggin.  
 Illustrated by Kate Seredy. Viking.

- Balloon Man, by Mrs. Elsie Cabot. Holt, 1927  
 Mopsa the Fairy, by Maria L. Kirk. Harper, 1927  
 The Princess and Curdie, by George MacDonald. Macmillan, 1927  
 Treasure of Carcassonne, by Albert Robida. Longmans, 1928  
 Hitty, Her First Hundred Years, by

- Rachel Field. Macmillan, 1929  
 The Long Bright Land: Fairy Tales from Southern Seas, by Edith Howes. Little, 1929  
 The Snow Image, by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Macmillan, 1930.  
 Stars Tonight, by Sara Teasdale. Macmillan, 1930  
 The Fairy Circus, author and illustrator. Macmillan, 1931  
 The Forgotten Daughter, by Caroline Dale Snedeker. Doubleday, 1933  
 The Little White Goat, author and illustrator. Macmillan, 1933  
 Branches Green, by Rachel Field. Macmillan, 1934  
 The Lost Merry-Go-Round, author and illustrator. Macmillan, 1934  
 The Snail Who Ran, author and illustrator. Stokes, 1934  
 Sung under the Silver Umbrella (a collection). Macmillan, 1935  
 Who Goes There?, author and illustrator. Macmillan, 1935  
 Bouncing Betsy, author and illustrator. Macmillan, 1936  
 Fierce-Face, by Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Dutton, 1936  
 Animals of the Bible, with text from the Bible. Stokes, 1937  
 The Little Mermaid, by Hans Christian Andersen. Macmillan, 1939  
 Presents for Lupe, author and illustrator. Macmillan, 1940

#### BOOKS ILLUSTRATED BY THOMAS HANDFORTH

- Toutou in Bondage, by Elizabeth Coatsworth. Macmillan, 1929  
 Tranquilina's Paradise, by Susan Cowles Smith. Minton Balch, 1930  
 Mei Li, author and illustrator. Doubleday, 1938  
 Faraway Meadow, author and illustrator. Doubleday, 1939

**BOOKS ILLUSTRATED BY INGRI  
AND EDGAR PARIN D'AULAIRE**

- The Magic Rug, authors and illustrators.  
Doubleday, 1931  
Ola, authors and illustrators. Doubleday,  
1932  
The Conquest of the Atlantic, authors  
and illustrators. Viking, 1933  
Ola and Blakken, authors and illustrators.  
Doubleday, 1933  
The Lord's Prayer. Doubleday, 1934  
Children of the Northlights, authors and  
illustrators. Viking, 1935  
George Washington, authors and illustra-  
tors. Doubleday, 1936  
East of the Sun and West of the Moon,  
authors and illustrators. Viking, 1938  
Abraham Lincoln, authors and illustra-  
tors. Doubleday, 1939  
Animals Everywhere, authors and illus-  
trators. Doubleday, 1940  
Leif the Lucky, authors and illustrators.  
Doubleday, 1941

**BOOKS ILLUSTRATED BY  
ROBERT LAWSON**

- The Wee Men of Ballywooden, by Arthur  
Mason. Doubleday, 1930  
From the Horn of the Moon, by Arthur  
Mason. Doubleday, 1931  
The Roving Lobster, by Arthur Mason.  
Doubleday, 1931  
Peik, by Barbra Ring. Little, 1932  
The Unicorn with Silver Shoes, by Ella  
Young. Longmans, 1932  
Haven's End, by John P. Marquand.  
Little, 1933  
The Hurdy-Gurdy Man, by Margery Wil-  
liams Bianco. Oxford, 1933  
Slim, by William Wister Haines. Little,  
1934  
Treasure of the Isle of Mist, by W.  
W. Tarn. Putnam, 1934  
Drums of Monmouth, by Emma Gelders  
Sterne. Dodd, 1935  
The Golden Horseshoe, by Elizabeth

- Coatsworth. Macmillan, 1935  
Betsy Ross, by Helen Dixon Bates. Whit-  
tlesey, 1936  
Ferdinand, by Munro Leaf. Viking, 1936  
Francis Scott Key, by Helen Dixon Bates.  
Whittlesey, 1936  
Seven Beads of Wampum, by Elizabeth  
Gale. Putnam, 1936  
Four and Twenty Blackbirds, by Helen  
D. Fish. Stokes, 1937  
I Hear America Singing, by Ruth A.  
Barnes. Winston, 1937  
In Secret Service, by Jean Rosmer. Lip-  
pincott, 1937  
Miranda Is a Princess, by Emma Gelders  
Sterne. Dodd, 1937  
Prince and the Pauper by Mark Twain.  
Winston, 1937  
The Story of Jesus, by Walter Russell  
Bowie. Scribners, 1937  
Swords and Statues, by Clarence Stratton.  
Winston, 1937  
Under the Tent of the Sky, by John E.  
Brewton. Macmillan, 1937  
Wind of the Vikings, by Maribelle Cor-  
mack. Appleton-Century, 1937  
Mr. Popper's Penguins, by Richard and  
Florence Atwater. Little, 1938  
One Foot in Fairyland, by Eleanor Far-  
jeon. Stokes, 1938  
Wee Gillis, by Munro Leaf. Viking, 1938  
Ben and Me, author and illustrator.  
Little, 1939  
Pilgrim's Progress, by John Bunyan.  
Stokes, 1939  
Gaily We Parade, by John E. Brewton.  
Macmillan, 1940  
Just for Fun (a collection). Rand, 1940  
They Were Strong and Good, author and  
illustrator. Viking, 1940  
Aesop's Fables, by Munro Leaf. Heritage,  
1941  
I Discover Columbus, author and illus-  
trator. Little, 1941  
Simpson and Sampson, by Munro Leaf.  
Viking, 1941



# Educational Values of Animated Cartoons

FLORENCE BRUMBAUGH  
*Principal, Hunter College Elementary School  
New York City*

TEACHERS are more skeptical than the average American who finds it easy to believe that anything which makes money is respectable, unless the personal publicity given to the promoter of a product is most unfavorable. The public, therefore, welcomed animated cartoons not only because they enjoyed them, but because Hollywood glamor has been associated with the productions, and the fact that an honorary degree was presented to Walt Disney for his contributions to children's enjoyment seemed logical and right.

Educators, in contrast, were inclined to smile at the citation "His work has the elements of great romantic art; the beautiful, the fantastic, the grotesque, all combining in irresistible and ineffable charm," and to enjoy the statement that he "labored like a mountain and brought forth a mouse."

It is probable that many teachers have thought of the animated cartoon as sheer entertainment to be enjoyed at the motion picture theatre, but not suitable for inclusion in the school program, forgetting that the jollity of these pictures not only adds zest to the child's life but that they are possible preventives of mental disorders. Pupil's impulses for over-expression of unconventional conduct, frowned upon by adults, may find satisfaction in the vicarious experiences of the film characters who behave in an exceptional manner.

The animated cartoons are based upon events we have experienced or should like

to have occur. The laws of probability are suspended and the illogical behavior of the characters appears to be natural in their magical setting. This simplified world, romantically impossible as it is, appeals to the desire of human beings to escape from a complex civilization to a realm where there is no necessity for explanation, and no tradition restrains. The primitiveness of the characters is blended with the elaborate mechanical backgrounds, in which exceptional deeds and imaginary happenings result in unexpected solutions, but where triumph seems reasonable under the circumstances.

The exaggerations of human weaknesses are not personal, but caricature life in general, and self-respect is not lowered. The extravagance is genial, as the external characters range over time and space with virtue struggling with wickedness, and altruism, bravery and honesty present in a not-too-obvious guise.

The virile hero, who never drinks, swears or attacks races or religions is admired by a gentle, chaste heroine romantically impossible, but appealing to all who see her.

The nit-wit arouses sympathy, for even the youngest child cannot imagine himself behaving in such a ridiculous manner, and thus the child's sense of humor is reached. The slapstick comedy may be rowdy, but it is always clean in these simplified substitutes for folk tales, for "The animated cartoon is a reproduction of the pure imagination, an extension of dreams into film. Its very color, pastel

and unreal, is like the color of a dream. It is to the acted movie what the fairy tale is to the novel."\*

The plasticity of the medium permits the reduction of dialogue or narrative in these fantastic films to a degree that enables the child to weave his own stories into them, without the necessity of reasoning about the plausibility of the story.

The art form is unique in that the synchronization permits the films to follow a dance pattern. Rhythm, which has a natural appeal to children, has attained a new form, as both animate characters and inanimate objects sway and dance throughout the pictures. The combination of song, dance and pictures in simple forms, is perfect from the child's point of view. The escape of the awkward child into the realm where everyone is graceful is not to be overlooked as an argument for supplying him with a satisfactory compensation, for he may imagine himself floating through space with all the lightness of the fairylike creatures who pass before his eyes.

Criticism of the artistry of some of the films on the basis of the grotesqueness of the figures, may be answered by the fact that abstract art must be explained, as was evidenced in the film, "Fantasia." Many adults were repelled by the distorted figures in certain portions of the picture, while the children accepted them as amusing characters not inconsistent with the music that accompanied their antics, but remained impervious to the parts most approved by their elders.

The universal appeal of "Snow White" can be attributed to the fact that grown-ups assumed a childlike attitude when viewing it, as they expected fantasy but were surprised and delighted with the beauty and humor of the pictures. "Pinocchio" was less successful because of pre-

conceived ideas of the main character based upon familiarity with a story that has had fewer changes and adaptations than the fairy tale. Pinocchio did not look as adults had pictured him, lean and lank, and the chubby boy disturbed them. Children, however, found it easy to alter their conception of him or to accept this Pinocchio as the true representation of the book character.

Another popular animated film that received more acclaim from the children than from adults was "Gulliver's Travels." They found no fault with incongruities, but enjoyed the exaggerations and applauded the ludicrous situations that teachers found distasteful.

The combination of the concrete with the abstract which will be found in the animated cartoons may lead to an appreciation of the latter when it is encountered elsewhere. The contrast of delicate colors, imaginative details and fantastic forms with the sharply outlined characters in bolder colors does not go unnoticed by the children. Their drawings reproduce the schematic forms, but they speak of their despair in trying to imitate the delicacy of the backgrounds. They can caricature the definite personalities with which they are familiar, but only appreciate the subtlety of the symbolism which arouses their emotions.

On the basis of this quality, if no other, the use of the animated cartoons is justified. No attainment test will succeed in measuring their effect upon the mind and emotions of the child, but their universal popularity is an index of their appeal.

Some of the characters have become international heroes who have been given affectionate nicknames. The comedies do not need to be translated into foreign languages, for they are understood by the gestures of the characters. Their naughti-

\* "The Big Bad Wolf," *Fortune*, Oct. '34, page 89.

# Shall Our Children Read the Comics? Yes!

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**D**URING TWENTY YEARS of reading the comic strips I have had many delightful hours of entertainment. I have met many pleasant characters, and have learned many odd bits of information. I still smile at the memory of Rube Goldberg's device for hat-tipping without effort. I remember Aunt Sarah Peabody as clearly as I remember my next-door neighbor of twenty years ago. Hairbreadth Harry's death-defying schemes still arouse my admiration. Alphonse and Gaston, the Mule Maud, Major Hoople and other characters created by the comic artists have as real a place in my circle of acquaintance as have Tess Durbyfield, David Copperfield, and Moby Dick; they are still among my friends, although some of their faces no longer appear in our daily papers.

When I mention my habit of comic strip-reading, someone usually says, "Yes, twenty years ago the comics were less objectionable than they are now. It's a long jump from Rube Goldberg to Al Capp." My rejoinder is that it is also a long jump from the Model T Ford to the airplane, or from Thomas Hardy to John Steinbeck; that insofar as I am able to judge, one might reasonably expect fashions to change in the style of humor as well as in the style of literature or in the mode of transportation. I continue to read the daily comic strips for pleasure despite the objectors who say I am debauching my intellect, very much as I continue to travel by whatever means is most convenient to me.

Inasmuch as the comic strip fulfills one of the Aristotelian functions of literature—that of providing pleasure—I had not considered any of its other aspects until I was recently asked by a student to discuss the literary value of the comic strip. This question, appearing rather unexpectedly in a classroom discussion of French comedy, caught me off guard, and I rather lamely replied that I suppose the comics *do* have a literary value. I even suggested that someone might, with little difficulty, trace their development from Comenius if he chose to do so. The question was raised however, and I began to evaluate the *pros* and *cons*; to weigh and consider the matter. My conclusion (alas for the scientific method) was pre-formed, so my problem was largely one of eliminating the *cons*. As I encountered the objections I listed them and made mental notes of my reactions to them. My final decision is that all the objections may be classified under three main headings: first, on the ground that the comics provide unhealthy excitement through the presentation of horror; second, that the comics are "sexy" or pornographic; third, that the comics are not artistic.

My refutation of these charges may be gathered completely into the statement that horror (or pornography, or bad art) may be found in any of the classes of creative work done by man *if* one is looking for it. The comics must, as must other productions of creative minds, be viewed in the proper frame of mind if they are to be appreciated. I rather sus-

pect that the detractors of the comics are influenced either consciously or unconsciously by that part of the American literary and moral heritage which is derived from the Puritan suspicion of anything pleasurable. I should like to point out, however, that other media of expression are subject to the same criticism as this which is brought against the comic strip: most of us, whether trained in architecture or not, are able to distinguish the horror of the American Gothic style in numerous stone buildings erected all over the country in the 1890's. Pornography has its most notable presentation in the phallic monument to Washington which dominates that section of Washington, D. C. known as the Mall. There is never any difficulty in finding bad art close to home. We can find outstanding examples of bad art in almost every home, school, or community. And when these objections are raised against the comic strip, I must protest also that it is not equitable to judge one medium of expression in terms of another; the comic strip (although increasingly moral) has never pretended to be a medium for the expression of great moral truths. It has not attempted to dictate the style of any of the fine arts, nor has it tried, particularly, to conform to any fine-art style. It has attempted merely to amuse.

Against the contention that children should be prohibited from reading the comics, I can accommodate my defense by saying that the viewpoint of the child does not (or should not, if he has been well-trained) include the inhibitions and taboos of the moral regulators and the aesthetes which keep them from reading the comics, and the child is most unlikely to recognize the unpleasant aspects observable by those trained in criticism.

Enough of my rebuttal: we are particularly concerned in this article with

the problem of whether children should or should not read the comics. It is the old problem of censorship in a new guise. Are we going to allow our children to develop their tastes for themselves, or are we going to give them our own necessarily biased preferences and aversions? I shall not attempt to argue the question of censorship beyond what I have said in the preceding paragraphs; the presentation of what I consider the educative values of the comic strip is much more effective.

We Americans are inordinately proud of our sense of humor, yet we have no course of study in our public schools which professes to teach the perception or appreciation of humor. Every child attempts to satisfy his desire for humor in literature or art by reading the "funnies," and it seems to me that teachers might follow this natural inclination of the child, developing it into a part of the child's education. Why not begin on this basis and teach an evaluation of the comic elements of both literature and life?

As scientists (most of us are proud of knowing something about the discoveries of this scientific age) we teachers should be quick to grasp the attractive introduction to science offered by the comic strip. When a child asks, "How does Superman jump that high?" why should we neglect the opportunity for laying a foundation for a later explanation of the force with which atoms bombard each other in the disintegration of the elements? The "mad scientist" of the comic strip presents a familiar conception with which the child can easily associate the work of the scientists whose lives and accomplishments are expected to be included in our school curricula.

English teachers who have deplored the state of the comic strip might well consider the case of Joan Bishop, the Quiz



Kid who learned to read by following the Sunday "funnies" carefully while they were read aloud from Station WGN. Children who read the comics are more interested in reading for understanding than when they are forced to read stories of animals which act like human beings. Why not capitalize on the child's natural interest in teaching him to read?

The comic strip is no more comic in 1941 than it was in 1921, but I think it is no less comic. Realism, or perhaps naturalism, has always been the style of most comic artists. The situations which occur in the comics are, in general, those which might occur in any day of almost any life: the comics are not class conscious. They present the frailties of the successful capitalist and the struggling share-cropper with a fine impartiality. They show the human characteristics of all classes of society; present the weaknesses common to all men. In this day of education for understanding the comics offer material for study of at least one of the integrating factors of all the classes of our society. Can we not use this almost universally available medium of instruc-

tion in teaching tolerance and understanding in a world which leans heavily toward intolerance and misunderstanding?

I have yet to see a comic strip which lacks implications of the highest sort of morality—the morality of poetic justice. In the older strips and in the newer strips good always triumphs. Hairbreadth Harry always thwarted the evil machinations of Rudolph; Superman, who might be Harry's grandson, continually pursues thugs and bandits to their punishment; the Katzenjammer Kids are always generously punished for their misdemeanors; Dagwood Bumstead always suffers for his carelessness; the kind folk, whether rich or poor, who protect Little Orphan Annie are always repaid in some way for their kindness to her. The list of examples could be amplified indefinitely; the obvious fact is that the comic strips, which are not expected to present great moral truths, do almost invariably exhibit a high integrity quotient by representing good forces as the ultimate conquerors of the evil forces.

Do we *dare* prohibit the reading of the comic strip?

#### EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF ANIMATED CARTOONS

(Continued from page 164)

ness seldom rouses censors, but instead provides an opportunity for parents and educators to admonish their children to eat their spinach or to see what happened to Donald when he misbehaved.

Adults are demanding escapist books and films as a release from tension induced by the world situation. Young children have the same needs, and these can be better satisfied by animated films

than by most of the motion pictures where live characters produce the humor that is craved by all. Supplement these pictures with a well-selected reading program, and the children are likely to come through this period better adjusted than those in schools where the sole emphasis is upon building a feeling for democracy, good citizenship and patriotism.

# The Art of the Comic Magazine

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THE EFFECT of the misnamed comic books upon the aesthetic judgment of children has not been studied objectively, but the fifteen million picture magazines sold each month on one hundred thousand newsstands throughout the country are probably playing an important role in the aesthetic education of children. Possessing none of the artistic qualities of the better juvenile magazines and books, the comic strip pamphlet is an art form chiefly because the word "art," like the words "literature" and "curriculum," has a number of meanings.

The principal purpose of the comic book seems to be to portray the amazing adventures of fantastic characters in a lurid pictorial style; to this end the format is devoted. The composition of the page is often altered from the usual "panels" into a hodgepodge of blotched lines and clashing colors in order to catch the eye of the casual reader and to carry the action of the story forward as rapidly as possible. A motion picture camera technique is introduced into the "panels," crowding together "close-ups," "long-shots," "montage effects," "bird's eye views," and other compositional arrangements to keep the reader from falling asleep between murders.

"When you hit a slow-moving part of your story where characters have to do a lot of talking and there isn't much physical action," advises Robert Turner<sup>(1)</sup> in an illuminating article on how to write stories for the comic books, "pep things up with dramatic angle shots or

\* Parenthetical numbers refer to titles in the "References," page 170.

by having the character doing something as he talks, lighting a cigaret, or twisting his hat, or loading a gun."

An examination of thirty picture magazines on the newsstands in Nashville, Tennessee, during the month of December, 1941, reveals that in general the first "adventure story" in the booklet is about as well drawn as the average daily newspaper comic strip, while the majority of the other pictorial paroxysms look as if they had been done by high school students during their study periods. Inexpensive color processes, together with the use of cheap printing inks on pulp paper, make the comic books garish and tawdry.

It seems to be the usual practice for the comic book artist to draw his cartoon strips from detailed directions supplied him by the author of the story. It is highly probable that factory methods are not uncommon: conveyor-belt systems wherein one person sketches the figures, another draws the backgrounds, a third completes the drawings in ink with a brush or a pen, and a fourth man finishes the page with the insertion of the necessary lettering. The amount of creative imagination used in this work, and the attention given to aesthetic principles in the creation of these cartoons can well be imagined.

Comic books are justified on the grounds that they provide emotional release for the reader, a needed escape from reality, that they are, as a matter of fact, only modern fairy tales: this viewpoint is supported by Thompson<sup>(2)</sup> Crawford<sup>(3)</sup> Dr. Laurretta Binder, and Dr. Reginald S.

Laurie<sup>(4)</sup>. Representative of those who feel that children's interest in comic books is only a natural stage in the development of children's reading interests, Gruenberg<sup>(5)</sup>, DeFee and Ferguson<sup>(6)</sup> believe that children will outgrow them and will turn to better literature of their own accord.

It remains to be proven, however, that any benefits to be derived from the reading of comic magazines are as wholesome as those to be derived from the reading of good fiction. And a growing literature on the subject indicates that the cartoon magazines may be so harmful as to justify amply the action of the Canadian government in banning their importation into that country<sup>(7)</sup>.

In a study of children in the public schools of New York City, Brumbaugh<sup>(8)</sup> found that comic strips exercised a bad influence upon the written English of children. Sterling North's<sup>(9)</sup> blitzkrieg of 1940 has not been surpassed as a general attack upon the picture pulps; his indictment of the comics as "furnishing a pre-Fascist pattern for the youth of America" is echoed by Vlamos<sup>(10)</sup> denunciation of the comic book super-hero as the strong man beyond all law, "the nihilistic man of the totalitarian ideology." Other writers have pointed out the sadism, the glorification of crime, the unwarranted emphasis upon sex in the cartoons; these aspects of the comic books are undoubtedly discussed elsewhere in this issue.

As another phase of the trend toward more pictures and less reading matter, the comics bring to juvenile fiction the dangers inherent in the pictorialized news-magazines. The substitution of pictures for words may lead to extremely superficial thinking; it is doubtful that reasoning can be divorced from the use

of words. We do not yet know that complex ideas can be presented in the kind of pictures that seem to appeal to the majority of people.

The substitution of true stories in the comic magazines for the prevailing sagas of super-electromagnetic morons is only substituting cigarettes for chewing tobacco. The problem must be met by a full recognition of the child's interest in the comic books. The teacher can neither ignore this literature nor jerk the shirts off boys found reading the booklets. The ability to understand the interests and desires of youth, and the ability to lead the child up into the realm of good literature is a test of the teacher's scholarship and her pedagogical skill.

A greater variety in subject matter and in types of literature should be used in the average heterogeneous English class. Present methods of teaching the classics must give way to more dramatic and emotionally stirring methods; the perfunctory dissection of a literary masterpiece by an English teacher too often becomes a post-mortem examination. We certainly need more school librarians who understand child psychology and educational methodology. It is possible that better ladder lists used more widely would prove to be of real value.

We must recognize that popular literature is educationally significant and we must start in this area with sympathetic and tactful guidance. As Hill<sup>(11)</sup> has suggested, we wish to encourage the child to distinguish between the real and unreal in cartoons. We can encourage criticism of the comic books from every point of view. Friedman<sup>(12)</sup> is of the opinion that they can be used to "enhance instruction, to vitalize reading for the poor reader, to extend vocabularies, to foster interest in current events. . ."

North<sup>(13)</sup> believes that the cure for "dreamy states of wishful thinking" and harmful day-dreaming is direct participation in fruitful work and play. The arts and crafts offer the youngster an opportunity to explore the world of the concrete, to learn the nature of tools, materials, and processes.

The great range of media in the arts has not been utilized in our public schools; there are arts for almost every individual. In creative activities the majority of children can find authentic adventure and the satisfaction of real achievement. Never has it been more necessary that our children be educated to face realities.

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# Opportunity to Write Freely\*

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**R**EDS TAKE 125,000 prisoners!  
Germans claim 3,000,000 dead.  
Parachute troops land in Crete!"

What a world for boys and girls to cope with! Children are exposed to radio programs, newspaper headlines, sketches and newsreels in which the forces of death, destruction and violence reflect man's disregard for human beings and human values. What are the results of these forces upon the present generation of boys and girls? In so far as I am aware, there is no study of the attitude of children today which is comprehensive enough to answer this question. Nor are there reliable studies which attempt to ascertain the influence of these *recent* forces apart from the cumulative impact of ten years of economic depression, widespread unemployment and human inequalities. In several schools, however, teachers report that boys and girls display greater tenseness, insecurity and anxiety than during any school year they have known. There seems little doubt that the present world crisis has intensified and extended the already high frequencies of insecurity and tension.

What should teachers do in view of the alarming world situation? What are their responsibilities in helping boys and girls preserve and develop fundamental human values? And what can they do to make experiences in school individually profitable and satisfying?

## *Responsibilities of Teachers*

Many teachers realize that their first responsibility is to understand boys and

\*Read before the Elementary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English, at Atlanta, Georgia, November 22, 1941. This is a part of the discussion of the general topic, "The Implications of the Defense of American Tradition to the Teacher of English in the Elementary School."

girls well enough to help them find experiences which will be at once satisfying and individually beneficial. These experiences, they recognize, should contribute to the establishment of socially desirable attitudes and values. Moreover, teachers are fully aware of the importance of rich and varied experience and activity, since the child who attains sound mental health is one who is genuinely and spontaneously responsive. Accordingly teachers are attempting to keep alive the childhood spontaneity that provides the basis for wholesome physical development and sound mental health. The need for this effort is vividly shown by several investigations. In one study, it was found that the number of play activities decreased as children grew older.<sup>1</sup> From eight to thirteen, the decrease was conspicuous, from thirteen to sixteen, it was still more rapid. Moreover, boys and girls seem to lose the desire and inclination to engage in creative pursuits as they grow older. Enrichment of the school program appears essential if this trend is to be checked.<sup>2</sup>

Expression, spontaneity, and creativity are necessary attributes in a free life; they are also the ingredients from which mental health develops. Their existence in a school usually signifies that excessive fear and anxieties have been dispelled and that an atmosphere prevails in which cordial human relationships flourish. A classroom devoid of these qualities usually

<sup>1</sup> This observation was made by Lehman and Witty in 1927 in *The Psychology of Play Activities* (Barnes and Co.), and recent studies by Howard Bell and others confirm these observations.

<sup>2</sup> This emphasis might provide a correction for the alarmingly high frequencies of physical defects in the current draft.

creates barriers to mental health and personality adjustment. Thus, it would seem that one of our first responsibilities is to encourage creative expression; at the same time we should oppose efforts to restrict or curtail this form of expression whenever it is found in our school today.

### *Creative Expression Through Writing*

Several examples in the literature of education reveal the significant progress that teachers are making in developing writing programs that serve children admirably in these times. Four teachers in Bronxville, New York, described their efforts in leading children to appreciate the many natural demands for practical writing and the joy which follows spontaneous individual expression described as personal writing.<sup>3</sup>

A librarian contributed to this literature by recording how "Children With Stories in their Heads" were led, through the development of the magazine *Flyin' High*, to write out their stories and realize joy in sharing them.<sup>4</sup> California teachers described the origin of effective speech and writing in boys and girls in *Their First Years in School*.<sup>5</sup> And accounts have been prepared by several groups of teachers in the schools of a Chicago suburb who have tried to make sure that every child has appropriate opportunities and encouragement in creative writing.<sup>6, 7</sup>

In all these efforts, there are certain basic premises on which the work is built. Creative writing is used to refer to composition in which the writer has had freedom to choose his own subject, the time for writing, the form in which his expres-

sion appears, and the length of the products.

To enable each child to find personal satisfaction through creative writing is indeed a problem for the teacher who is confronted daily with thirty to forty youngsters. Some of these children will have little to express, record, or communicate because their background of experience is inadequate or because their sensitivity to the world about them is limited and undeveloped. To increase the sensitivity of children to their immediate environment is a task which requires unusual skill and resourcefulness on the part of teachers. Teachers are showing unusual resourcefulness in this endeavor—through trips, excursions, and many other planned experiences which require observation and experimentation.

A second problem, intimately associated with the foregoing, involves encouraging boys and girls to become genuinely and spontaneously responsive to people.

### *Studying the Needs of Boys and Girls*

In both of these tasks the teacher can contribute greatly to the growth of boys and girls. He can attain a thorough understanding of the background of experience and the needs of each child. He can then assure each child opportunities for sharing his experience through abundant and varied oral and written expression.

In attempts to explore children's needs for expression, teachers are making notable advances. Educational periodicals contain accounts which reveal many ingenious ways by which teachers have obtained deep appreciation and understanding of boys and girls. Some teachers have employed check-lists advantageously; others have utilized interest inventories; some have used anecdotal methods; and still others have examined diary rec-

<sup>3</sup> Ferebee and Others. *They All Want to Write*. Bobbs-Merrill, 1939.

<sup>4</sup> Fenner, P. "Children With Stories in Their Heads." *Elementary English Review*, March, 1940.

<sup>5</sup> Sherer and Others. *Their First Years At School*. Los Angeles County Board of Education, 1939.

<sup>6</sup> Cloyd, E. and teachers. Chapter X in *Mental Health in the Classroom*. 13th Yearbook, Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction, N. E. A., 1941.

<sup>7</sup> Serviss, T. "Teachers Study the Language Arts," *Educational Method*. Oct. 1941.

ords made by children themselves. All of the methods have yielded good results; the method used is not the significant aspect of this work. The important feature is the attitude of the teacher who in observing children in many situations grows increasingly appreciative of their interests, their problems, and their needs.

Such study leads to a sympathetic relationship and mutual understanding between teachers and children. This relationship is the heart of good teaching. Without it, good methods are sterile; equipment and materials are wasted; and worthy ideals and attitudes, which cause a child to seek steady improvement, atrophy.

#### *Opportunities for Sharing Expression*

After getting to know boys and girls and their problems, the teacher has a unique responsibility to guarantee every child the opportunity to express his interests and share his experience. The following is a procedure developed by one group of teachers to attain this goal. Pupils in every class were asked merely to check from a comprehensive list those activities in which they had participated and found "greatest pleasure," "individual satisfaction," and "worth" during the previous week. The importance of the activities was emphasized in the phrasing of several leading questions. After the child had checked the list, the teacher inquired whether he had been given an opportunity to discuss or share his problems or interests either in oral or in written work.

In several classes, as many as twenty-nine out of thirty-two children had been offered no opportunity for writing about items of vital interest or deep concern. As if by magic, these children turned to writing when they were encouraged to record or discuss these experiences or

activities. And quite as remarkable as the increased amount of writing was the improvement in the quality of the written products. It seemed that, under such conditions, every child was impelled to communicate accurately and clearly. Accordingly, there was improvement in the mechanics of writing. In fact, correctness of expression was demanded by the interested groups. In one school the *Handbook of English for Boys and Girls*<sup>8</sup> was in constant use, and the help of the teacher was frequently sought before the child would feel his writing deserved to be presented to his group. Writing appeared in many forms. The most gratifying form was perhaps the beautiful prose or poetry written because of increasing joy in spontaneous, free expression.

#### *Mental Health Through Writing*

In several schools, we noted the benefits of this form of creative expression on the mental health of certain boys and girls who seemed maladjusted, unhappy, or unsuccessful in their group relationships. The following incident will reveal clearly the value of such expression.

A few years ago a teacher noticed a small much-folded piece of paper on her desk.<sup>9</sup> A dandelion had been stuck with apparent haste in a corner of a page containing the following poem:

See pure gold!  
Why do people love it so?  
And keep it in a store  
When a yellow dandelion's  
Purer, cheaper—so much more.  
The metal is so hard and cold  
This little weed's a better gold.

Any teacher might have been pleased, I think, by this poem. But in this instance there was unusual delight, for this child had been withdrawn, sensitive, and diffident and this was her first really spontaneous expression. But it was not her last,

<sup>8</sup> Robert Pooley, Lou LaBrant, and Della Kibbe. *Handbook of English for Boys and Girls*. Scott, Foresman.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to the teachers in the Willard School for permission to cite this episode and poem.

for her teacher promptly used the poem as proof of her ability. The pleasure which her associates derived from her accomplishment brought added reason for self-assurance and marked the beginning of a creative life that has meant happiness and success throughout her years in school. In this case, the attitude of the teacher was an important factor in the child's release and development. She had always been interested in the positive aspects of behavior, in growth and accomplishment for every child. Creative work has unfolded and flourished under her inspiring guidance.

A most important function of writing—a means of escape or self-expression—is infrequently mentioned by educators. Writing of this type has always been significant in wholesome development, but today it seems more important than ever before.

#### *Development of An Appreciation of Words*

As this work proceeded, there developed a marked concern on the part of boys and girls that the right *word* would be employed. It soon became clear that words had many meanings and that context determined meaning. These youthful semanticists began making games, puzzles, and exercises to show the multiple meaning of words, and a particular interest developed in abstract words and conceptual terms. In one school, the teachers added appreciably to the growth of vocabulary by encouraging boys and girls to develop a clear understanding of conceptual words. Words such as *honesty*, *charity*, and *democracy*, illustrate this group. They form the "core" of the vocabulary in the social studies. And they frequently preclude communication, create confusion, and lead to misunderstanding or actual emo-

tional disturbance. The following is a method employed by one group of teachers: The pupils made a list of new or confusing words which they encountered in the social studies books during each week. Several words were singled out as most important in understanding the passages under consideration. These words were discussed by the children who developed definitions for them. These definitions, at the end of a period of discussion, fell into two classes. The first included those words whose meanings, the children agreed, were reasonably adequate. For many of these words there were several equally acceptable and meaningful definitions. These definitions were placed in *Our Social Studies Word Book*. But the meanings of other words, after considerable discussion, were still not agreed upon as clear and definite. Committees were appointed to investigate these words further; they consulted various sources for additional relevant information and submitted the results of their investigations for discussion at the next class meeting. In this way the meanings of many difficult words were clarified.

These and other inclinations to study words led to an interest in our changing language. A period every day was set aside in one school for this study. In certain grades, the children attained a rather thorough understanding of *Basic English*, while in another, a story of our developing means of communication provided for the introduction and effective appreciation of almost all important principles of grammar. All these efforts led to clear communication and to the development of a deep and genuine appreciation of the meaning, value and significance of words. As Lewis Mumford<sup>10</sup> says:

<sup>10</sup> Mumford, Lewis. *Faith For Living*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940.



# Vacation for Victory

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TEACHERS and parents have long realized that summer vacation is often an idle interval during which children are unmindful of the mental habits and attitudes fostered in the school-room. This prolonged recess in the formal process of educating our boys and girls, however delightful it may be to them, has its disadvantages. If the child spends the long summer days in undirected activity, if he is left to shift for himself, the readjustment to school in the fall is likely to be very difficult. Again, when the child is suddenly freed from school and, as so frequently happens, left to his own devices for killing time, it is more than probable that, as the Jeremiahs would say, nothing good will come of it. Indeed, this kind of aimless vacationing may even work against many of the cardinal aims of schooling. Satan still finds mischief for idle hands to do.

Fortunately, however, teachers have come to feel in recent years that the school should assume some responsibility in directing the summer activities of its pupils. Now that America is at war, this responsibility becomes more urgent than ever before. The perils that beset our country call for effort and sacrifice from each of us. Who shall say that our children cannot serve in a score of ways, if those ways are made clear to them?

Summer vacation, it is obvious, provides a fine occasion for children to gather new information, to confirm desirable attitudes, habits, and skills, and to expand their interests. There are many kinds of summer activities which promote these ends. To make the children familiar

with them, the teacher, toward the end of the school year, may well have her pupils prepare lists of possible activities. She may describe the equipment needed and the procedures involved. Typical activities include making collections, taking photographs, making hobby workbooks, going on excursions, listing good radio programs, making things out of wood, and reading for a purpose.

Perhaps more timely and worthwhile than most of the projects mentioned above are certain tasks growing out of the war. These have a very real worth in our national economy and for that reason deserve particular attention. They are such activities as saving materials hitherto discarded as useless—old newspapers, bits of rope, rags and bottles, paper bags, pieces of wood that may serve as fuel, articles made of rubber, tin containers, tin foil and lead foil, etc. There are also Victory gardens to be planted and tended. With a few judicious instructions from their teachers (and parents, too), children will quickly see the importance of these jobs, which are admirably suited to occupy those long vacation days, made still longer by an extra hour of daylight. At the same time children should be made aware that certain foods, notably sugar, must be used sparingly, that most of the things they eat or wear cost more than they formerly did, that pennies and nickels invested in defense stamps, not in candy or movies, are well spent. It is the mission of teachers and parents to make the younger children think of these matters as games rather than as duties, for a sense of duty is not the strongest

attribute of a boy or girl bent on vacation. To do this, friendly rivalries between the children may be encouraged, or the child's natural desire to emulate his elders may be called into play.

Victory gardens promise to be a red-letter activity this coming summer, especially in small towns and rural areas where plots of ground are readily available. This means that many children already have a fine summer task cut out for them, the task of caring for their own Victory gardens or participating in family gardening. But garden fruits and vegetables don't just grow. Much information is needed, information about soils and seeds and planting time and cultivation practices. Here the teachers may be helpful by calling the attention of parents or older children to the excellent garden bulletins issued without cost by state agricultural colleges.

Granting the benefits of vacation with a purpose, the teacher may ask: Just how do I "sell" this idea to my pupils? There are many ways, depending on the age of the children, the extent of parental co-operation, the character of the proposed enterprise, facilities available, and other factors. Often a letter from the teacher to the pupils is enough to start things rolling. In the letter she should mention things to collect such as stones, seeds, leaves, butterflies, stamps; places to visit such as post-offices, libraries, museums, parks, the state capitol, historical landmarks; a number of books on nature, on things to do, on adventure, history, science, and the like. She should also call the children's attention to the wartime tasks now open to them.

Again, in planning the summer activities of children, the teacher may find it desirable to confer with or write to their parents, explaining what she is trying to do and enlisting their help. Here she

should stress the need of proper equipment, be it tools, toys, books, boxes, or what not. Most suitable for small children are toys that suggest imaginative play and construction, and hence act as an incentive to creative work. Such play things include packing boxes and tools for building doll houses, wagons, airplanes, windmills; Meccanos or Tinker Toys for constructing bridges and machines; materials for doll clothes, with a few completed examples and simple patterns; materials for making kites.

Yet again, mothers and teachers together may consider activities in which the children share in family responsibilities, such as keeping the home tidy, marketing, doing chores, conserving food, and practicing thrift. It is important, too, to discuss with parents what opportunities the home offers for stimulating the child's curiosity about science, especially the nature of plants and animals. Gardening contributes much to this end, as does collecting flowers, tree leaves, shells, rocks, seeds, butterflies. Studying science books and pictures, observing animals, and sketching scenes from nature are still other means.

Finally, to provide the vacation-time child with pleasant object lessons in the co-operative nature of our society, the teacher should urge mothers either to take or to send their children on sight-seeing trips to industrial plants, airports, stores, markets, farms, dairies, shops, mills, parks, gardens, water works, in short, all the enterprises and show-places that typify an American community. After such excursions the child may make a sort of game out of listing as well as he can all the agencies and people that contribute to his welfare.

A fall school exhibit always provides a lasting stimulus for summer work. The wish to have their collections or their

# English For United Action

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OUT OF THE misery and devastation of this War something will come. The people who make up the world will be enslaved, robbed, and debased under the lash of a self-elected master class—or they will decide their own destinies within the framework of a friendly world state, peacefully co-operating in a community of nations. What will decide? Only people. They will make the answers.

What people? Who will answer? All the people! The butcher and the baker, the truck driver, the seaman, the clerk, the machinist, the doctor, the statesman, the general, the private in the rear rank—and *English teachers*. All of these people will decide. They will unite and work together for certain victory or they will allow the enemies of mankind to break them apart into a thousand little warring groups, powerless to resist invasion from within and without.

Language is indispensable in forging the unity that will protect us. English will have a major part in the outcome of the struggle in which we are all engaged. It is for these reasons that so much depends upon teachers of English in these days and upon our conception of the work we elect to do. The war and the peace will be made with words even more than guns, and tanks and T.N.T. It is to teachers of English the people look for guidance in the sane, healthy and healing use of words. Working together with our fellows in the shop and mine we can give each other the help we need.

In word and action we can teach that it is the all-pervading purpose of language to help all people grow and develop so that their whole lives are better, freer, richer, happier and more effective for themselves and for their fellows of every race, nationality, economic position, and political and religious belief. Ours is no neuter sex, and words are not alike to us. We can use them for the improvement of mental and physical health. We can direct our teaching of English to the end that food, clothing, shelter, education, work and recreation shall be available in abundance for the sustenance and the cultural enrichment of all men.

In planning and evaluating educational programs in English we can insist that human values—the present as well as the future effect upon the lives of those concerned—shall be central and decisive. We can use and teach language so that it will act for the clarification rather than the confusion of issues, for decreasing prejudice, dissipating and preventing fear, establishing peace among men and nations, honoring and dignifying human beings, and building amicable working relations, and mutual confidence and trust. As teachers we can use our positions and influence to insure that language is not taught or used in such a way as to build hatreds for other peoples or to frustrate and drive children from the school as failures, but to enrich their lives and help them grow. It is our responsibility to see that these possibilities are realized.

# Use of Recorded Music to Introduce Literature to Children

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**B**ALM FOR troubled spirits in a war-torn world is music. Children oppressed by radio and newspaper reports of war, by air raid drills and by the hysteria of adults can find sweet refuge in listening to music. In music they can find calm relaxation.

The kinship between music and literature is close. The music may relax the child and "set the mood" for appreciation of related literature. Children who have listened to "A Shepherd's Life in the Alps" are ready to hear or to read the story of *Heidi*. Enjoyment of American country dances, of "Money Musk" or "Old Dan Tucker," may get older children ready for the appreciation of Carl Sandburg's *Abe Lincoln Grows Up*, or James Daugherty's *Daniel Boone*. For younger children Victor Herbert's "The March of the Toys" may set the tone for appreciation of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Steadfast Tin Soldier."

In a sixth grade class, the children were encouraged to locate records which were related in mood or theme to their favorite stories. As an example, "Narcissus" was played by the teacher and followed by the old Greek legend of Narcissus. After the record was played, the children followed the story with much interest. With the story fresh in their minds, they listened again to the music,

and discussed the meaning of the different parts. Easy to note was the calm beauty of the melody during the love making of Echo and the exciting thrill of Narcissus' first view of his beauty mirrored in the pool. The harsh wild notes of his refusal of Echo, and the subsequent gentle melody of his change to a golden flower made the story live in the imagination of the children.

The boys and girls suggested that the "Glow Worm" would be a fitting introduction to firefly poems. They enjoyed "Fireflies" by Edgar Fawcett and "The Firefly" by Elizabeth Madox Roberts while under the spell of the music of the "Glow Worm."

"The Fairies' March" from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" proved a dainty introduction to "Fairies" by Hilda Conkling, and "The Fairies Have Never a Penny to Spend," by Rose Fyleman. In the "Fairies' Dance" on the same record the children could catch a glimpse for a moment of gay and tiny whirling feet in James Kennedy's "Night Dancers" and Rose Fyleman's "Have You Watched the Fairies."

These sixth graders were learning stories to tell to the little children as a defense service in the summer. They suggested that the Hansel and Gretel



record by Humperdinck would introduce the story of Hansel and Gretel well to the kindergarten children. Eagerly the older children learned and practiced telling the story at home. They divided it into parts, using the different themes in the record as a guide. A fine surprise the kindergarteners had on the day that they were invited to the sixth grade room to hear the record and the story.

One group of fifth grade children discovered that Norwegian people include many references of their belief in trolls in their music and literature. They listened to "The Peer Gynt Suite" by Edvard Grieg, and enjoyed a sample of music which is probably the best known troll music of Norway. Listening to "In the Hall of the Mountain King," they heard the trolls tiptoeing from their hiding places and greatly frightening Peer Gynt until the sound of the bells terrorized them into stopping their wild dance. The children found much pleasure in reconstructing the story of Peer Gynt from the music and dramatizing the weird actions of the trolls. Many of the children recalled the troll in the old Norwegian tale, "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," and searched their library for more tales of these mischievous beings who dwelt in the mountain sides and fjords. Their favorite was the old legend, "The Boy Who Fooled the Troll." In this story the youngest of three brothers had to take the troll's silver ducks, his gold and silver quilt, and his golden harp in order to save his own life. The children's enjoyment of the supernatural and imaginative elements in stories seemed to be increased through the use of music. Also a musical introduction helped the children to feel emotion in their interpretation of poetry.

"Wind Among the Trees" and other music describing antics of the wind proved effective in the enjoyment of the

mood of "Happy Wind," by William H. Davies, "A Riddle," "Windy Nights," by R. L. Stevenson, and "Wind is a Cat," by Ethel Romig Fuller.

The children were inspired to write original poems about the wind after these experiences with both music and literature.

In the kindergarten and first grade, so often a strain of music, a dance, a song may lead to the appreciation of a new story or a lovely poem. For instance, in one first grade during the morning a rest period, soothing sleepy-time songs or orchestrations help tense, over-stimulated children to relax. On one particular morning Brahms' "Lullaby" and Gaynor's "Baby's Boat's a Silver Moon," were used. That afternoon, a little girl brought in a beautifully illustrated copy of "Wynken, Blynken and Nod" by Eugene Field. She said that our rest music had made her think of the poem! The whole group enjoyed her find. Then began a search for sleepy poems. Here are some that were found: "In Winter Time," by Stevenson; "Bye-lo Baby Bunting"; "Dreams," and "Counting Sheep," by Fisher; "Portals of Dreamland," by Her-ring; and "The Little Dreamer," by Knippel.

Another musical approach to literature was experienced by the group after a joyous participation in the dance, "Little Playmate Dance with Me." Another teacher in the same building sent a recording to the group as a surprise. Imagine the delight of the children on hearing the strains of their dance during the telling of "Hansel and Gretel." Keen appreciation of this folk tale and dramatic interpretation of the story followed.

Heightening the natural kinship of literature and music by happy choice of related theme and mood, the teacher builds a deeper appreciation of both arts.

## LIST OF RECORDINGS AND RELATED LITERATURE\*

## RECORDS

- 22175 Hansel and Gretel; 22176 Hansel and Gretel.  
 19882 Gnomes—Dwarfs; 22177 March of the Gnomes; March of the Dwarfs.  
 22168 Nutcracker Suite; 19730 March of the Little Lead Soldiers; 9148 March of the Toys; 19881 Soldiers' March.  
 20896 Hymn to Apollo.  
 20606 William Tell Overture; 20607 Parts 1, 2 3, 4.  
 20344 Wind Among the Trees; 20525 The Whirlwind; 25451 The Four Winds; 11454 Storm Music; 4393 The Storm.  
 20396 Witches Dance; 20399 The Witch.  
 20450 Elves and the Shoemaker; 20079 Elfin Dance; 20399 Elfinspiel.  
 20174 Brahms's Lullaby.  
 19891 In the Belfry.  
 22161 A Deserted Farm, of Brer Rabbit.  
 21972 By the Waters of Minnetonka.  
 20443 Gavotte.  
 20344 At the Brook.  
     1143 The Swan.  
 10882 Fairies Scherzo.  
 20739 The Blacksmith.  
 35784 Robin Hood.  
 20896 Veni Creator Spiritus.  
 20162 Waltz No. 2 Brahms.  
 20174 The First Noel, Adeste Fidelis.  
 20079 Light Cavalry.  
 20374 The Postman; 20399 The Postillion.  
     4083 Ye Banks and Braes.  
 19926 Serenade.  
 24525 The Marionette Show; 8661 Funeral March of a Marionette.  
 20245 Peer Gynt Suite.  
 25765 Native Bird Calls.  
 35282 Shepherds' Life in the Alps.  
 35511 In Wintertime Waltz.  
 74560 Midsummer Nights Dream.  
     7770 Aida; 8091 Carmen; 8124 Carmen; 25168 Hansel and Gretel; 25169 Hansel and Gretel; 25170 Hansel and Gretel; 14181 Lohengrin; 7105 Lohengrin; 1726 Die Walkure.  
 19758 The Glow Worm.  
 20121 Narcissus.  
 20447 Money Musk, Old Dan Tucker.

\* Numbers are for Victor records.

## RELATED LITERATURE

- Hansel and Gretel.  
 Snow White; The Princess and the Goblins; Old Pipes and the Dryad.  
 Steadfast Tin Soldier and other toy stories and poems.  
 Persephone.  
 William Tell.  
 Happy Wind (William Davies); A Riddle; Windy Nights (R. L. Stevenson); Wind Is a Cat (Ethel Fuller).  
 Three Little Witches; and other Hallowe'en stories.  
 The Elves and the Shoemaker; I Met a Little Elfman Once.  
 Wynken, Blynken, and Nod; Mother Stories.  
 Bells (Poe).  
 Uncle Remus Stories.  
 Hiawatha.  
 Raggle Taggle Gypsies.  
*Fairies and Chimneys* (Fyleman).  
 The Ugly Duckling.  
 Someone.  
 The Village Blacksmith.  
 Robin Hood.  
 Jeanne d'Arc.  
 Swing Song (Allington); How Do You Like to Go Up in a Swing? (Stevenson).  
 The Christmas Story.  
 Ben, the Battle Horse (William A. Dyer).  
 The Postman (Fyleman); The Pony Express.  
 Twa Brigs (Burns).  
 The Echo.  
*Pinocchio*.  
 The Boy Who Fooled the Troll; The Three Billy Goats Gruff.  
 Poetry about Birds.  
*Heidi* (Johanna Spyri).  
 Winter Poems.  
 Midsummer Nights Dream.  
 Stories of operas published by the Metropolitan Opera Guild; *Aida*, *Carmen*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Lohengrin*, *Die Walkure*.  
 Fireflies.  
 Narcissus (Greek legend).  
*Abe Lincoln Grows Up* (Carl Sandburg).

# The Plague of the Comics

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TEN MILLION American children are reading serial comics. Those small, insidious, colorful magazines!

A best seller list for children would be almost entirely composed of titles like "Weird Comics," "Blue Bolt Comics," "Fantastic Comics," "Blue Beetle Comics," "Superman," "Batman," and so on and on until you reach the amazing total of one hundred and eight. One child who was questioned could list thirty-six titles of this twaddle in less than ten minutes.

Some of these "best sellers" are fairly good, no more harmful than the news comic strips; but compared to the dime novels of the last decade (novels that were all blood and thunder and thought to be utterly demoralizing) most of the comics are rank, outrageous and inane. On practically every page of every one of them can be found such themes as mayhem, playing up a voluptuous scantily clad siren, shady victories, weird and impossible settings, bribery, machine gunning, kidnapping.

In my own class, children have been continually referring to the ideas they have read in their comics. Here lies the danger. Children do not discriminate. They do not read a comic as a comic, but rather they read it as a truth, as a record of events that have happened or will happen. They are strongly influenced by what they read.

This comic disease began three or four years ago. It has developed into a serious, wide-spread plague that takes millions of dollars from children's pockets. It is true that as a rule plagues die out after run-

ning their course, but in running their course they leave behind horrible desolation, grief and putrefaction. The comics plague will die out; but we cannot wait. The challenge must be taken immediately. It must be taken by teachers and by parents, the doctors of the minds of children.

The first step in curing is a diagnosis of the case. In this plague we find that there is a strong comics consciousness. Children are aware of the comics, they thirst for them, they are after the colors, pictures, thrills. It is up to the teachers and parents to direct this awareness into channels that will lead children to more worthwhile ends. As it is, they are wasting time, they are reading worse than dime novel trash, moral fiber is being undermined, crime and unlawfulness are being stressed in their minds, they are gaining false ideas and conceptions, they are being drilled in slang.

It is one thing to diagnose, it is quite another to suggest a treatment. Comic reading is becoming (in many cases has become) habitual. A habit can be overcome much more easily if another one is substituted. A sure antidote for "comicitis" is the school and town library. But these alone are not nearly enough. The comics have something that appeals to children; they have pictures, colors, thrills, adventure, imagination. The thrills and excitement of *Treasure Island*, *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, *Jungle Book*, *Daniel Boone* must be brought to the attention of children. The teacher's efforts will be appreciated; for, like all of us, children are anxious to find and read books that enthrall. But they

don't know where to find that kind of story. They don't know what is between the covers they see lined along the shelves; and they are either too lazy to look, or have looked and been disappointed. As teachers and parents we can do much to acquaint children with the worlds of adventure that lie between the two covers of a book. Worlds that are the child's merely for the reading. These methods are always effective:

1. An eye-catching display of jackets. The book belonging to each jacket must be available.
2. Partial but eloquent readings of stories by the teacher and parent. Children are thrilled by good, comfortable reading.
3. Book clubs in which children can describe and retell stories they have read.
4. Frequent, sympathetically directed library excursions by both teacher and parent.
5. Talks by publishers and printers, or by pupils, parents and teachers, on the making of books; talks by authors on the writing of stories.

6. The reading of books *for pleasure* and not for the purpose of making a tedious written report.

If used, these suggestions are certain to heighten interest in books, and by the same token to overcome some of the complications of "comicitis."

We must do something and do it now. We cannot stand idly by and allow these immoral publishers of the comic serials to fill the minds of our youth with the murder, corruption, machine gunning, cheap justice, frowsy political propaganda that crowd the pages of their publications.

Remember the startling facts; in two years the comics have mushroomed to the point where there are 108 different serials: to the point where 10,000,000 copies are sold monthly, and to the point where over \$1,000,000 is taken from the pockets of children to buy this drivel and insanity.

Give children higher ideals, open the way to finer reading and squash the comics publisher; or, commit a serious crime against the young minds of America by standing by in idleness.

### OPPORTUNITY TO WRITE FREELY

(Continued from page 174)

Where are the foundations for these ideals; in external nature? On the contrary, man is born into a world of human values and human associations. He knows life from the beginning, not as a fact in the raw, but only as he makes use of the society about him and uses the tools and instruments and modes of expression that society has developed and conserved. . .

The essential forms of communion and communication are already present in the relation of the mother to her baby; this is a prelude to wider fellowships, if not deeper understandings. From the mother's mouth comes the greatest of all gifts to the personality, articulate speech, out of which

thought flows, through channels long cut by tribes whose very name has vanished. . . In the beginning was the Word. By means of the word, man has translated a world of confused feelings, sensations, motor activities, into a world of meanings.

In short, man's greatest triumph in producing order out of chaos, greater than law, greater than science, was language. To keep the channels of human communication clean is a duty as primal—and holy—as guarding the sacred fire was for primitive man. He who debases the word, as the fascists have so unsparingly done, breeds darkness and confusion and all manner of foulness.



# Linguistics and Reading

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(Continued from April)

**A**LTHOUGH the various methods that have been advanced are, in practice, only slight adaptations of the universal method of word-reading, it will be worth our while to glance at one of them which has some vogue, namely the *sentence method* or *ideational reading*. This method attempts to train the child to get the "idea" or content directly from the printed page.

When a literate adult reads, he passes his eyes rapidly over the printed text, and, scarcely noticing the individual words or letters, grasps the content of what he has read. This appears plainly in the fact that we do not often notice the misprints on the page we are reading. The literate adult now observes the laborious reading of the child, who stumbles along and spells out the words and in the end fails to grasp the content of what he has read. The adult concludes that the child is going at the thing in a wrong way and should be taught to seize the "ideas" instead of watching the individual letters.

The trouble with the child, however, is simply that he lacks the long practice which enables the adult to read rapidly; the child puzzles out the words so slowly that he has forgotten the beginning of the sentence before he reaches the end; consequently he cannot grasp the content. The adult's reading is so highly practiced and so free from difficulty that he does not realize any transition between his glance at the page and his acceptance of the content. Therefore he makes the mistake of thinking that no such transition

takes place,—that he gets the "ideas" directly from the printed signs.

This mistake is all the more natural because the adult reads silently; since he does not utter any speech-sounds, he concludes that speech-sounds play no part in the process of reading and that the printed marks lead directly to "ideas." Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The child does his first reading out loud. Then, under the instruction or example of his elders, he economizes by reading in a whisper. Soon he reduces this to scarcely audible movements of speech; later these become entirely inaudible. Many adults who are not very literate, move their lips while reading. The fully literate person has succeeded in reducing these speech-movements to the point where they are not even visible. That is, he has developed a system of internal substitute movements which serve him, for private purposes, such as thinking and silent reading, in place of audible speech-sounds. When the literate adult reads very carefully,—as, when he is reading poetry or difficult scientific matter or a text in a foreign language,—he actually goes through this process of internal speech; his conventional way of reporting this is that he internally pronounces or "hears himself say" the words of the text. The highly skilled reader has trained himself beyond this: he can actually shunt out some of the internal speech-movements and respond to a text without seizing every word. If you ask him to read aloud, he will often replace words or phrases of the printed text by equivalent ones; he has seized only the

high spots of the printed text. Now this highly skilled adult has forgotten the earlier stages of his own development and wants the child to jump directly from an illiterate state to that of an over-trained reader.

It is true, of course, that many children in the upper grades—and even, for that matter, many post-graduate students in the university—fail to seize the content of what they read. It was this unfortunate situation which led to the invention of ideational methods in reading instruction. This however, meant confusing two entirely different things. So much can be said, however; the child who fails to grasp the content of what he reads is usually a poor reader in the mechanical sense. He fails to grasp the content because he is too busy with the letters. The cure for this is not to be sought in ideational methods, but in better training at the stage where the letters are being associated with sounds.

The extreme type of ideational method is the so-called "non-oral" method, where children are required not to pronounce words but to respond directly to the content. They are shown a printed sentence such as *Skip round the room*, and the correct answer is not to say anything, but to perform the indicated act. Nothing could be less in accord with the nature of our system of writing or with the reading process such as, in the end, it must be acquired.

The stories in a child's first reader are of little use, because the child is too busy with the mechanics of reading to get anything of the content. He gets the content when the teacher reads the story out loud and, later on, when he has mastered all the words in the story, he can get it for himself, but during the actual process of learning to read the words he does not

concern himself with the content. This does not mean that we must forego the use of sentences and connected stories, but it does mean that these are not essential to the first steps. We need not fear to use disconnected words and even senseless syllables, and, above all, we must not, for the sake of a story, upset the child's scarcely formed habits by presenting him with irregularities of spelling for which he is not prepared. Purely formal exercises that would be irksome to an adult, are not irksome to a child, provided he sees himself gaining in power. In the early stages of reading, a nonsense syllable like *nin* will give pleasure to the child who finds himself able to read it, whereas at the same stage a word of irregular spelling, such as *gem*, even if introduced in a story, will discourage the child and delay the sureness of his reactions.

There is always something artificial about reducing a problem to simple mechanical terms, but the whole history of science shows that simple mechanical terms are the only terms in which our limited human capacity can solve a problem. The lesser variables have to wait until the main outline has been ascertained, and this is true even when these lesser variable are the very things that makes our problem worth solving. The authors of books on reading methods devote much space to telling why reading is worth while. The authors of these books would have done far better to stress the fact that the practical and cultural values of reading can play no part in the elementary stages. The only practical value of responding correctly to the letters of the alphabet lies in the messages which reach us through the written or printed page, but we cannot expect the child to listen to these messages when he has only begun to respond correctly to the sight of the letters. If we insist upon his listen-

ing, we merely delay the fundamental response.

If you want to play the piano with feeling and expression, you must master the keyboard and learn to use your fingers on it. The chief source of difficulty in getting the content of reading is imperfect mastery of the mechanics of reading.

Space forbids our giving more than a meager outline of a system of reading instruction based upon the facts which have been set forth on the preceding pages.

The first step, which may be divorced from all subsequent ones, is the recognition of the letters. We say that the child *recognizes* a letter when he can, upon request, make some specific response to it. One could, for instance, train him to whistle when he saw an A, to clap his hands when he saw a B, to stamp his foot when he saw a C, and so on. The conventional responses to the sight of the letters are their names, *aye, bee, see, dee*, and so on, down to *zee* (which in England is called *zed*). There is not the slightest reason for using any other responses.

It is an open question whether all the letters, small and capital (in printed form, of course) should be taught before reading begins.

At the pre-primer stage the habit of left-to-right scanning should be developed by means of appropriate exercises, which may well afford, at the same time, an introduction to the letters and the numeral digits.

Our first reading material must show each letter in only one phonetic value; thus, if we have words with *g* in the value that it has in *get, got, gun*, our first material must not contain words like *gem*, where the same letter has a different value; similarly, if we have words like *cat, can, cot*, our first material must not contain

words like *cent*. Our first material should contain no words with silent letters (such as *knit* or *gnat*) and none with double letters, either in the value of single sounds (as in *add, bell*) or in special values (as in *see, too*), and none with combinations of letters having a special value (as *th* in *thin* or *ea* in *bean*). The letter *x* cannot be used, because it represents two phonemes (*ks* or *gz*), and the letter *q* cannot be used, because it occurs only in connection with an unusual value of the letter *u* (for *w*).

Our first reading material will consist of two-letter and three-letter words in which the letters have the sound-values assigned at the outset. Since the vowel letters are the ones which, later on, will present the greatest difficulty, we shall do best to divide this material into five groups, according to the vowel letter.

The work of this first stage is all-important and should be continued until the pupils are very thoroughly trained. Nonsense syllables, such as *bam, bap, mim, mip*, should be included. Words unfamiliar to the child, such as perhaps *van, vat*, should not be avoided; they should be treated as nonsense syllables or, if there is time, accompanied by a very brief explanation of their meaning.

Short sentences of the type *Nat had a bat* can be used at this stage.

The second stage takes up regular spellings in which double consonants and other digraphs appear in consistent uses, e.g. *ll* as in *well*, *th* as in *thin*, *sh* as in *shin*, *ch* as in *chin*, *ee* as in *see*, *ea* as in *sea*, *oa* as in *road*, *oo* as in *spoon*. If a very few words of irregular spelling are introduced at this stage (e.g., *is, was, the*), it is possible to devise connected reading of reasonably varied content.

The third stage takes up words whose spellings may be called *semi-irregular*, for

example the type of *line, shine, mile, while* or the type of *bone, stone, hole, pole*. At this stage, also, two-syllable words whose spelling is consistent with the other materials, can be taken in: *winter, summer, butter, sister*, (but not, for instance, *father, mother, brother*). A small set of the commonest irregular words (pronouns, forms of the verbs *be, have, do, and go*) is included because it enables us to give extended readings of connected text.

The last stage takes up irregularly spelled words, such as *father, mother, night, all, rough, cough, though*. It is only here that the question of reading vocabulary need be considered. In the first three stages an individual word (apart from the small stock of irregular ones that have been taken in) offers no problem: all that is needed is the habit of connecting letters with sounds. At

those stages, unfamiliar words like *van, moot, mote*, afford good practice precisely because they are unfamiliar, and the same can be said of nonsense syllables. At the fourth and last stage, however, each word, being entirely irregular in shape, is a separate item to be memorized. At this last stage, accordingly, we use only familiar words which are needed for reading.

No matter how well we plan in other respects, our teaching will yield inferior results so long as the material which we present is clumsily chosen. Only if we choose our material in accordance with the nature of English writing, will the classroom procedure which we have so carefully developed, produce proper results. The children will learn to read in a much shorter time, and they will read more accurately, more smoothly, and with better understanding of the content.

#### VACATION FOR VICTORY

(Continued from page 176)

handiwork in the exhibit can be the children's constant incentive to purposeful activity all summer long. This exhibit may highlight the first week of school, making easier the often-difficult transition from vacation days to school days. Activities not entirely done may be completed for the exhibit with the aid of the teacher; rocks may have to be identified, specimens classified, or reference books consulted. Labeling the items, preparing catalogues or programs, and arranging the displays should be left as much as possible to the children themselves. Boys and girls engaged in gardening, in salvaging waste materials, or in other work of this kind might be asked to prepare written reports in the form of booklets to be displayed on walls or tables.

The value of directed recreation for children in school is well established. How much more important it is, then, that these same children have a degree of guidance when summer vacation rolls around. Not so many years ago the teacher's responsibilities to her pupils were thought to be done when school was out. The modern teacher, however, working as she does in friendly co-operation with parents, feels a genuine interest in the deportment and achievements of her children, whether the children are in school or out of it. With our nation in the throes of war, this obligation to the children of today, the citizens of tomorrow, takes on a more serious meaning than it ever had before.



# New Books for Boys and Girls

MIRIAM BLANTON HUBER\*

*Altadena, California*

**Calico the Wonder Horse, or The Saga of Stewy Slinker.** By Virginia Lee Burton. Illustrated by the author. Houghton Mifflin, 1941. \$1.00.

This book represents an experiment in utilizing the techniques of the comic strips, both in format and in content.

The pages are wide but very short. Eight shades of paper are used: lavender, light brown, green, orange, cerise, blue, and two shades of yellow. On many pages two separate illustrations appear. The few lines of type on each page run full width or are divided into columns to conform to the width of the illustrations, all of which are in heavy black ink.

The story is laid in Cactus County near the Badlands. The hero is Calico, a cow-pony. Her master is Hank, a cowpuncher. It is Calico who has the ideas and shows Hank how to capture Stewy Slinker, a notorious outlaw, and his band of desperadoes. The action is fast and interesting and covers the best-known incidents of the "Westerns"—a cattle stampede, a stagecoach holdup, hairbreadth escape from the raging waters of a flood, and a Christmas celebration in the district schoolhouse. The plot is well handled and is, on the whole, childlike. At the end the sudden transformation of Stewy Slinker and his band is questionable; by promising good behavior, they escape all punishment. Children will consider this denouement a whitewashing for their benefit and will resent it. Poetic justice would have been far better served if the author had devised means by which Stewy Slinker earned his reinstatement among the people of Cactus County.

In my judgment the content of this book is much more successful than its format. The story, except for its ending, is really good, and its fast-moving action will satisfy a child's love of adventure. The different colors in paper have been employed to give variation in the backgrounds of the pictures, but the reader is scarcely conscious of the colors, they add so little to the pictures. The heavy black ink used in reproducing the drawings gives a blurr-

ed effect and makes it difficult to recognize details that would give pleasure to a child if he could see the pictures more clearly.

The claim that the book will displace the comics seems to me to have little foundation. One reason is an economic one—a book selling for a dollar cannot compete heavily with the ten-cent comics. Then, too, I question that the author-artist has caught the real feeling of comic-strip pictures. There is close-knit sequence in the drawings of the comics, children need to recognize only a few changes in details as the pictures progress, thus they actually do considerable "reading" of the pictures—a pedagogical element not always recognized in discussions of the comics. Virginia Lee Burton has achieved such sequence in only a few instances and even then maintained it for only a short time. I believe this story in a more conventional format with larger, clearer picture and less effort to imitate the comics would be more successful. With a better and more logical ending, it could then take and hold its place among books that bring real pleasure to children.

**Tag-Along Tooloo.** By Frances Clarke Sayers. Illustrated by Helen Sewell. Viking, 1941. 87 pp. \$1.50.

Tooloo, short for Tallulah, is five years old. Her sister Ann, and Susan and Virginia who live near-by, are several years older. Tooloo tries hard to keep up with them and do the things they do, so much to their annoyance that she earns the name, "Tag-Along Tooloo."

There is a chinaberry tree that Ann and Susan and Virginia climb so easily, but forbid Tooloo to try because she is "too little." Tooloo bids her time and gets Brody, a colored boy, to bring a ladder. She climbs high into the tree and then Brody thoughtlessly takes the ladder away. Her adventures in the tree and her final rescue cause much excitement in the little Texas town.

At another time Tooloo swallows a nickel. Aunt Melaynay, the colored cook picks her up by the heels and shakes her. Out comes the nickel.

Other exploits, such as getting lost at the Mardi Gras parade, and narrowly escaping a

\*Editor and Compiler of *Story and Verse for Children*. Macmillan.

# Editorial

## "Laughter learned of friends"

NOWHERE HAS the responsibility of English teachers in this crisis been expressed more succinctly and forcefully than in Dr. Roberts' brief statement on page 177, "English for United Action." The building of confidence, the dissipation of fear, the recognition of human dignity—"It is our responsibility," Dr. Roberts says, "to see that these possibilities are realized."

Articles in this issue which deal with language as an art, re-enforced by and re-enforcing other arts, suggest one way to attain these goals.

The Washington teachers who prepared the excellent list of recordings to be used in connection with literature (pages 178-80) comment on the wholesome effect of music at times of nervous tension. Dr. Brumbaugh shows that the humor and fantasy of animated cartoons are salutary. Freedom to express personal interests helps "boys and girls preserve and develop fundamental human values," Dr. Witty indicates.

The art of illustration is, of course, very closely tied in with literature. How richly illustrators contribute to appreciation of values, literary and artistic, Dr.

Brewton shows in his authoritative discussion.

"Europe stinks of hate," reported a writer in *The American Mercury* (March, 1942, p. 291). America must not. Bending every effort to obliterate cruelty and ugliness, we must at the same time preserve for our children the American heritage of kindness, humor, compassion, and beauty. As teachers we may foster these qualities through literature and the arts; and we must take care to recognize them wherever they occur.

It is the task of teachers, one which they accept gladly, to preserve and advance, through these strained times, the "laughter learned of friends and gentleness of hearts at peace" that the young English soldier carried with him through the earlier World War.

*The Review* wishes to express its gratitude to Dr. Charles Pendleton of The George Peabody College for Teachers for his assistance in securing the stimulating discussions of the comics and of illustrations of children's books which appear in this issue. Readers are invited to write the editor, expressing their views of the matters set forth in this number.

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### NEW BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

(Continued from page 187)

runaway at the shore picnic where they fish for crabs, win for Tooloo the admiration of the older girls. Her final success comes at the circus. She falls between the seats, but the clown rescues her and takes her behind the scenes of the circus and she becomes the heroine of the day.

The story is fresh and appealing and the setting is unusual and interesting. Children in

the third grade will enjoy it but may experience some difficulty in reading the Negro dialect, of which there is a great deal. It seems to me the flavor of the Negro idiom could have been presented just as attractively with less exact phonetic reproduction of the dialect.

The illustrations by Helen Sewell are delightfully in key. They add to the amusing and original atmosphere of the story.

# THE HORN BOOK MAGAZINE

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for Children and Young People

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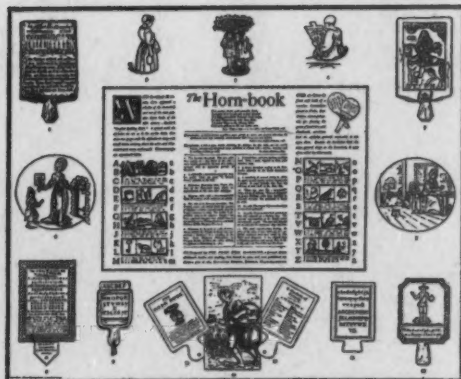
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